

As shown by Chapin (1954, p. 135), *Poeoptera lugubris major* Neumann is not a valid race. It was described from the eastern Congo, and birds from this region in the A.M.N.H. collection have wings measuring 90–96. They also show no colour difference from the nominate race.

Distribution: Kibale and Impenetrable Forests, western and south-western Uganda. Specimens were collected for the Los Angeles County Museum from both forests by R. Glen, A. Williams and A. L. Archer, and for the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, from the Impenetrable Forest by Arthur Twomey and John Williams. Altitudinal range of collected specimens from the Impenetrable Forest is 4,200 feet to 5,300 feet, and in addition I saw birds at 3,500 feet in June 1962. The bird is numerous in both places, as the number of collected specimens can testify, and it is curious that it has not been reported before outside of Bwamba, particularly as the Kibale Forest has been well collected. I found the bird common in a strip of forest, an outlier of the Kibale Forest, just below the New Ruwenzori Hotel, near Fort Portal, in July 1963. The birds were feeding in fruiting trees together with two other starlings, *Lamprocolius purpureiceps* and *Lamprocolius splendens*.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The bird is named in honour of the late Cecil Webb of Nairobi who guided me on my first visit to these forests in 1961. I should like to thank Arthur Twomey and Kenneth Parkes, of the Carnegie Museum, and Herbert Friedmann, of the Los Angeles County Museum, for the loan of specimens on which this description is based.

Reference:

Chapin, James P., 1954. The Birds of the Belgian Congo, Part 4. *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*, Vol. 75B.

Variation in *Falco dickinsoni* P. L. Sclater, 1864

by P. A. CLANCEY

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Dickinson's Kestrel *Falco dickinsoni* P. L. Sclater. 1864: Chibasa, Shiré R., southern Malawi, is a sombre coloured falcon with a somewhat restricted range in the southern part of Africa. It is also somewhat uncommon and is not particularly well represented in most collections of African birds. It ranges from about the middle and lower reaches of the Limpopo R., in south-eastern Africa, north in the east to Pemba Island, off the East African coast, and central Tanzania, and west through Rhodesia, Malawi, Zambia, and the southern Congo to northern Botswana (mainly Ngamiland), the Caprivi Strip, northern South-West Africa and Angola. Most standard works comment on the proclivity *F. dickinsoni* has for palms, particularly Borassus palms, though this is by no means true of all populations.

During the course of a recent collecting trip to Sul do Save, southern Moçambique (April–June, 1966), I obtained two females of this falcon, which, on being compared with material from the Northern Province, Zambia, in the Durban Museum collection, were found to be much paler and greyer, less brownish, below, and whiter over the head-top, face, nape and hind neck. In order to resolve the nature of the variation detected

in our limited material, I assembled in the Durban Museum a series of some 46 specimens drawn from the Transvaal, Rhodesia, Moçambique, Malawi, Botswana, South-West Africa, Zambia and Angola. A careful examination of this material confirms that the species is readily divisible into well-marked light and dark forms, though with the evidence at present available, it is not possible to decide whether the variation is a geographically related polymorphism or of a type normal in polytypic species. Broadly speaking dark birds are of general distribution, from east to west, with the pallid ones restricted to the south-eastern parts of the species' range in Rhodesia, Sul do Save, and the north-eastern Transvaal.

On comparison with dark birds, light-coloured variants have the top of the head, nape and hind neck paler and whiter, less overlaid with a brownish-grey wash, and sharply demarcated from the mantle and scapulars, not merging insensibly into the black of the mantle, and with the dusky shaft-streaking finer; black of mantle, scapulars and wings duller, the feathers apically fringed with grey. Face wholly whiter. Below, much paler and whiter (breast about Pallid Mouse Gray [Ridgway (1912), pl.li], as against Gray [same pl.]), the apical fringes quite creamy, and without or with only vestigial Dark Mouse Gray panels over the flanks; thighs paler grey.



Photograph by Dennis Cleaver

Falco dickinsoni

Ventral aspect of specimens of Dickinson's Kestrel from Moçambique, Rhodesia, Zambia and Angola to show the marked variation present in this falcon.

The following are data of the material examined, arranged in light and dark coteries of specimens:

(a) *Light birds*: nine. *Transvaal*: ♀ Mokeetsi (14th August, 1922); *Moçambique*: ♀ Massinga (23rd May, 1966), ♀ 10 miles n. of Mapinhane (31st May, 1966), ♂ Zimbiti, Beira (19th January, 1910); *Rhodesia*: ♀ Birchenough Bridge (9th January, 1938), ♀ Kana R. at 18° 30' S., 28° 30' E. (15th August, 1950), ♂ Mbadje Pan, Shangani R. (18th July, 1963), ♂ Selukwe (30th July, 1960), ♂ Cashel (10th June, 1962) (*ex captive*).

(b) *Dark birds*: 37. *Moçambique*: two ♀♀ near Beira (25th December, 1906), ♂ Quelimane (March, 1953); *Rhodesia*: ♀ lower Pungwe R. (30th August, 1958), ♀ Ngamo, Wankie (17th January, 1958), one ♂, one ♀ 14 miles w. of Victoria Falls (18th and 23rd August, 1956); *Botswana*: ♂ Shorobe, Maun (8th December, 1962); *South-West Africa*: one ♂, one ♀ Ochimbora (3rd and 13th November, 1890); *Angola*: ♂ Cassinga (1st May, 1960), ♂ Calai, Cuangar (28th July, 1964), ♀ Sambio (Dirico) (10th August, 1964); *Zambia*: ♂ Salujinga (10th April, 1962), 62 miles s. of Mwinilunga (17th September, 1956), ♂ Mayao, Kabompo (30th October, 1959), ♀ Kabompo (12th March, 1959), two ♀♀ 40 miles w. of Luwingu (16th April, 1954), ♀ Mumbwa (28th March, 1949), ♂ Kabulamwanda, Namwala (19th August, 1949), ♀ Namwala (17th March, 1949), ♀ Musombwe, Mporokoso (11th October, 1954), ♀ Kasama (22nd April, 1954), two ♂♂ Milima, Kasama (16th July, 1938, 26th June, 1951), one ♂, one ♀ Inchelengi, Luapula R. (September, 1963), ♀ Kalene Hill (13th April, 1962), ♀ Mazabuka (23rd May, 1949), ♀ Mukupa Katandula, Mwera Marsh (2nd February, 1953), ♂ Mbawala/Lukulu confl. (16th November, 1938); *Malawi*: ♂ Selinia, L. Malawi (August, 1935), ♂ Karonga (2nd July, 1947), ♂ Kota Kota (September, 1935), ♀ 20 miles s. of Kalonja (1896).

Mackworth-Praed and Grant (1952), in dealing with the plumage characters of this falcon, state that "The young bird is browner than the adult, especially on the under-parts". I do not find that birds in juvenal dress are very much browner over the head and below than adults. They are, however, to be distinguished by the finer barring in the tail and the greenish, not yellow, feet.

Considering that polymorphism is present in several species of *Falco*, notably in *F. rusticolus* (Vaurie, 1961, 1965), *F. eleonora*, *F. concolor* (Meinertzhagen 1954), *inter alia*, it seems prudent to refrain from proposing any breakdown of *F. dickinsoni* into races at this stage, despite the fact that the variation seems to have a geographical basis. Further collecting of material in the south-east of the species' range may show such a step to be desirable, though the present evidence favours the view that *dickinsoni* is polymorphic like some of its congeners.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Forty-six specimens of *F. dickinsoni* were examined collectively in the Durban Museum in furtherance of this research project. To augment the small Durban series, material was borrowed from the following institutions: South African Museum, Cape Town (through Prof. J. M. Winterbottom), Museu Dr. Alvaro de Castro, Lourenço Marques (Dr. M. Corinta Ferreira), the Transvaal Museum (O. P. M. Prozesky), the National Museum of Rhodesia, Bulawayo (M. P. Stuart Irwin), and the Instituto de Investigação Científica de Angola, Sá da Bandeira (Dr. A. A. da Rosa Pinto). To all those mentioned I tender my sincere thanks.

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A hybrid Ring-necked Pheasant x domestic fowl

by JAMES HARRISON

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Hybridisation between *Phasianus colchicus* L. and the domestic fowl have been recorded on many occasions; such cases can, in fact, be regarded as commonplace. The sporting journals and country magazines have often a brief note of such and quite frequently the account is illustrated by a photograph.

The present instance of this hybrid relates to two hens belonging to Mrs. Haggie of Thirsk, Yorkshire, which were visited by a stray cock pheasant, and the actual act of mating was observed.

The two hens, both birds of the year and 'first layers' were, it is believed, a mixed strain of Rhode Island Red and Light Sussex; they can be regarded as healthy young stock and reproductively active. This latter point is of importance in that it is a reasonable assumption that both hens would at least have had a normal average fertility and the progeny, all things being equal, a normal average capacity to survive.

It is, of course, well known that in intergeneric hybridisation both fertility and the survival rate of the progeny are quite often seriously affected. These points are well illustrated by the present case; the two hens concerned produced between them 40 eggs, and of these only 13 hatched, although one must set against this overall statement the fact that of the third setting of 12 eggs, none hatched owing to broody trouble, but at the same time it is believed that all the eggs were infertile. On the morbidity side there is the hard fact that of the 13 that did hatch, only three survived into their first year plumage.

The survivors comprised two cocks and one hen, and the fate of these was as follows:— one male escaped, the second died of coccidiosis (*vide* Mr. D. V. Sinclair, M.R.C.V.S.) while the hen, the subject of this communication, succumbed to a widespread fatty degeneration.

The two cocks, so I am informed by Mr. Sinclair (*in litt.* 19th March, 1968) were identical in type; neither of course had lived long enough to assume the full first winter dress. What the overall incidence of this particular cross is it is difficult even to hazard a guess, and whether it is fertile in either direction is again perhaps unknown. When one remembers that the domestic fowl is kept, one would imagine, by every gamekeeper in the country and that keepers' cottages are invariably located on the game reserve one can only be somewhat surprised that the hybrid is not even more numerous than it is known to be.

The male hybrid was a large bird, certainly larger than the average cock pheasant, and its stance was perhaps nearer to that of a domestic fowl than a pheasant, while the form and carriage of the tail was also much more that of a fowl than a pheasant, being shorter and fanned out.